



FIELDREPORT

Southwest Region • Winter | Spring 2017



Seeking a Fine Balance as Visitors Find Their Parks

Early reporting of 2016 national park visitation numbers indicates the National Park Service (NPS) centennial campaign, that encouraged people across the country to “Find Your Park,” was a resounding success. A record breaking 307 million people from around the world visited our national parks in 2015 and the record is likely to be broken again in 2016 as people flocked to the parks during the centennial celebration.



While we need to continue to engage the next generation of advocates for our national parks and welcome a more diverse spectrum of visitors that better reflects our country’s population in the Park Service’s second century, some of our most popular national parks are already facing real challenges from overcrowding and congestion.

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The Threads that Bind Us as a Nation

The election season is over, and we have a new President and a newly elected Congress. Amidst all the controversy of this campaign season, there seems to be general agreement, quite rare these days, that we have deep divisions in our country. At this point, it is not entirely clear what will happen to our Southwest national parks, which face an array of challenges under the Trump administration. What we do know, however, is that our national parks are beloved by all Americans (and millions of foreign visitors). So in a country that is so divided, it is important to reinforce and celebrate those threads that bind us—including the national parks. This is a theme we will carry forward with conviction to the new Administration.

From what we have gleaned from comments during the campaign and new pronouncements from the President-elect, many priorities that we have been advancing to protect our national parks are at risk in the coming years. Expansion of oil and gas development on federal lands is clearly in conflict with our very successful efforts, through Master Lease Planning, to promote balanced and thoughtful energy development that protects intrinsic park resources (air, water, scenic views, natural quiet, night skies) and other important recreation and

In a country that is so divided, it is important to reinforce and celebrate those threads that bind us — including the national parks.

traditional tribal interests while offering appropriate development opportunities for industry. The targeting of the Environmental Protection Agency, and its enforcement of laws, rules and regulations, places our efforts to reduce regional haze in our Southwest parks at risk. Saying that climate change is a hoax dismisses what the director of the National Park Service, Jon Jarvis, asserts is the greatest threat to our parks. Climate change induced drought challenges our efforts to assure Colorado River management decisions integrate environmental and recreational needs in addition to other authorized mandates and requirements.

At a time when visitation at parks across the country is booming (well in excess of 300 million annually), and visitation numbers at parks in the Southwest continue to

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Top: Young tourist in Bryce Canyon National Park, UT ©Marysmn | Dreamstime.com **Left** Photographers and tourists watching sunrise at Mesa Arch, Canyonlands National Park, UT © Donyanedomam | Dreamstime.com

FIELD REPORT

WINTER | SPRING 2017

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico & Utah

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Protecting Parks in Arizona



Promises made in the heat of Presidential campaigning, if fulfilled, could mean great threats at **Grand Canyon National Park** and **Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument**.

The Environmental Protection Agency, for instance, makes sure longstanding air pollution laws are enforced at Navajo Generating Station to improve views and air quality at Grand Canyon National Park. The Forest Service prevented an Italian company's dream of a mega-development at the park's entrance from proceeding. The Department of the Interior placed a moratorium on new uranium mining to protect Grand Canyon's fragile water supplies. Will new leadership cast aside these protections to favor a few specific businesses over a national icon visited by six million people every year?

The promised "new wall along the border" would be an expensive and damaging monstrosity at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, where the U.S. Border Patrol and National Park Service currently work together with the existing fence and surveillance technology to make sure visitors are safe and wildlife is protected.

Despite a changing political landscape, most Americans are proud and supportive of our national parks, including Arizona's canyons, deserts, cultural treasures, and other resources protected and interpreted for visitors in our national parks. NPCA will re-double efforts to make sure the new administration understands and joins us in cherishing this heritage.

Above: Cholla, Organ Pipe Cactus and Saguaros in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, AZ.



With broad support, the National Park Service Centennial Act (H.R. 4680) passed Congress in early December! The Centennial Bill, championed by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), and Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) and sponsored by Congressman Rob Bishop (R-UT), will expand the Centennial Challenge, a public-private partnership, establish and fund a national parks endowment, and provide additional opportunities for young people and volunteers to serve in and learn from our parks.

This bill will help address some of the \$12 billion in needed repairs to park infrastructure, such as unmaintained trails and deteriorating buildings and structures that help tell America's story but are in danger of falling apart. This bill includes provisions proposed to Congress by the Obama Administration and passed with broad bipartisan support by the U.S. House of Representatives and by unanimous consent in the U.S. Senate. The bill was signed by President Obama in mid-December 2016.

TAKE ACTION: Please contact your House and Senate members and **thank them for supporting the National Park Service Centennial Bill!** Write a letter, send a postcard, make a phone call, but let your voice be heard!

Capitol Switchboard: 202.225.3121

To learn more about NPCA's advocacy work: www.findyourvoice.camp/

For more info on how to contact your elected officials: www.usa.gov/elected-officials

Seeking a Fine Balance as Visitors Find Their Parks

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At many parks across the country, NPS is trying to find the right balance between ensuring park resources are preserved in perpetuity and providing a high-quality national park experience to those venturing from around the world to visit. The essence of the national park experience is at risk as the opportunities to experience some of our national parks without a crowd diminish.

While the solution for each park will be different, we believe that some of our most popular parks will need to actively manage visitor access through reservation, timed-entry or permit systems. We are committed to working with the parks, leaders in the gateway communities, counties and states, and the public to help identify and support solutions that protect the national parks for future generations.

Here in the Southwest region, we are weighing in on visitor use management planning for Zion National Park and Petroglyph National Monument and traffic congestion management planning for Arches National Park.

Zion National Park: Over the past 10 years, Zion National Park visitation has increased 35 percent. Current visitation levels for 2016 are up 15 percent from 2015 and are expected to exceed 4 million, causing traffic congestion and gridlock in gateway communities, long lines for shuttles and restrooms, an increase in emergency calls and visitor complaints, and damage to natural and cultural resources. Last spring, the Park Service initiated a Visitor Use Management Plan process that is considering a wide range of solutions that includes timed-entry or reservation systems for Zion and Kolob Canyons. NPS expects to have preliminary alternatives available for public review by summer 2017.

Arches National Park: From 2010 to 2015, visitation to Arches National Park increased by 38 percent from just over 1 million visitors to nearly 1.4 million. In 2015, the NPS initiated a Traffic Congestion Management Plan to consider ways to improve the visitor experience by reducing parking congestion and related crowding problems in the park and to further conserve the park's resources that make these places so extraordinary. NPCA supports a timed-entry system as the best solution since it would account for the

number of visitors the park can accommodate during peak times while minimizing impacts on park resources and ensuring a high quality visitor experience. NPS has gathered input from the public and there will be another opportunity for public review of their draft plan.

Petroglyph National Monument: Petroglyph National Monument, adjacent to Albuquerque, New Mexico, is an urban park that protects one of the largest petroglyph sites in North America with profound spiritual significance to contemporary Native American tribes. As Albuquerque grows, use and access has increased, resulting in a maze of unmaintained social trails crisscrossing a fragile landscape prone to erosion. Petroglyph National Monument initiated a Visitor Use Management Plan process to formalize a trail system and manage public use to address user conflicts and preserve its sacred cultural sites. NPS is analyzing input from the public and developing a draft plan that will be open for public review.

To learn more about all of the NPS Management Plans, please click on: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/ManagementPlans.cfm>.

Below: Lines of visitors waiting for the shuttle to visit destinations in Zion Canyon in Zion National Park, UT. ©Cory MacNulty | NPCA



Six Parks the Trump Administration Must Protect from Encroaching Oil and Gas Development

A new administration brings new priorities. The outgoing Obama Administration has made great strides in the West protecting national park units from the potential negative impacts of oil and gas development on public lands, while providing more certainty for reasonable development. The department of Interior led by Sally Jewell and previously by Ken Salazar, offered guidance for public land managers to work collaboratively both together and with key stakeholders to assure that land offered for energy development would be well conceived from the start. A primary tool, Master Leasing Plans (MLPs), has brought key stakeholders together—federal land managers, industry representatives, local businesses and elected officials, native American tribes as well as conservation and outdoor recreation interests—to seek consensus on where drilling should or should not be allowed. This inclusive planning process has been put in motion in a number of places throughout the West, highlighting the progress that can be made from unlikely partnerships and collaboration. The Trump administration may or may not honor this previous progress. However, parks are much more likely to be protected from negative impacts if park advocates continue to voice their support for America's national parks, their economies and our collective heritage. NPCA will work to make sure that the incoming Trump Administration hears our message that without thoughtful planning, oil and gas development can cause serious and potentially irreversible damage to the parks and the gateway communities whose economies are connected to these special places. According to the NPS 2015 visitor spending effects study, the six parks under threat from development create \$426.7 million dollars in economic output, and are part of a park system that generates nearly \$2.1 billion dollars for Colorado, Utah and New Mexico. Take a look at these iconic parks here in the Southwest, that void of protection, face serious threats from oil and gas development.



ABOVE: Summer thunderstorm over Waterpocket Fold in **Capitol Reef National Park, UT** ©Ariel Solomon NPS **RIGHT PAGE:** Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings at **Mesa Verde National Park, CO** ©Sumikophoto | Dreamstime.com **Canyonlands National Park, UT** ©Kravka | Dreamstime.com **Arches National Park, UT** ©Gerald Marella | Dreamstime.com **Chaco Culture National Historical Park, NM** ©Sumikophoto | Dreamstime.com • **Dinosaur National Monument, CO/UT** ©Rinus Baak | Dreamstime.com • **Capitol Reef National Park, UT** ©NPS | Jacob Frank

THE SIX PARKS

MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK— In October, the BLM Tres Rios Field Office announced, after extensive analysis and community engagement, the initiation of an MLP for oil and gas leasing on public lands near Mesa Verde National Park. The formal planning process is set to commence in early 2017. The National Park Service has expressed serious concerns regarding oil and gas development near the park.

ARCHES AND CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARKS—Oil and gas leases sold directly outside the parks in the waning hours of the Bush Administration spurred the creation of the MLP process under then Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. Years of community advocacy and stakeholder engagement have resulted in a plan that protects the parks and the Moab outdoor recreation economy while providing more certainty for oil and gas operators in the area. A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued in December 2016.

CHACO CULTURE NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK—The Department of Interior announced in October 2016 that the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Farmington New Mexico BLM are partnering on an expanded analysis of oil and gas leasing and management on public and tribal lands near Chaco Culture National Historic Park and neighboring communities. Scoping for this effort is currently underway in New Mexico and the Resource Management Plan for lands near Chaco is set to release its initial draft mid-2017.

DINOSAUR NATIONAL MONUMENT— In August of 2016, Colorado BLM completed the Dinosaur Trail Master Leasing Plan for lands in Northwest Colorado. The BLM notes the plan provides a “management framework that balances the development of more than 3 million acres of federal mineral estate with protection for natural resources, cultural properties and special areas.”

CAPITOL REEF AND CANYONLANDS NATIONAL PARKS—Initial scoping for the San Rafael Desert MLP which focuses on oil and gas leasing for public lands between Capitol Reef and Canyonlands National Parks was conducted in the summer of 2016. A draft of management alternatives for the MLP is set to be released in early 2017.

For more information and updates about our Responsible Energy Work, go to www.npca.org.



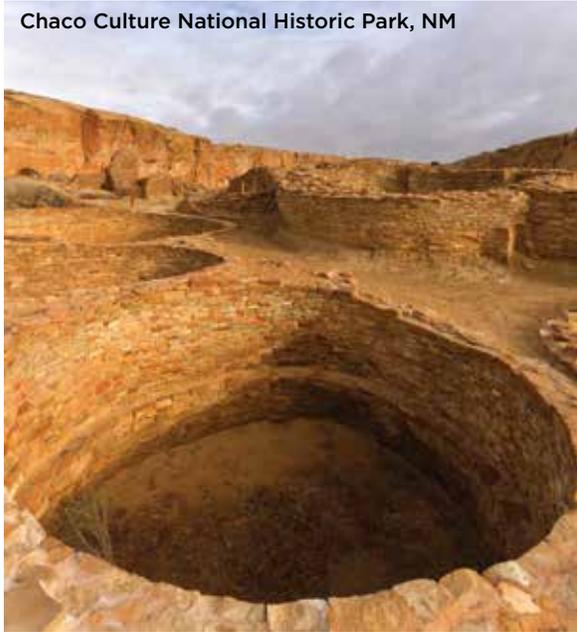
Mesa Verde National Park, CO



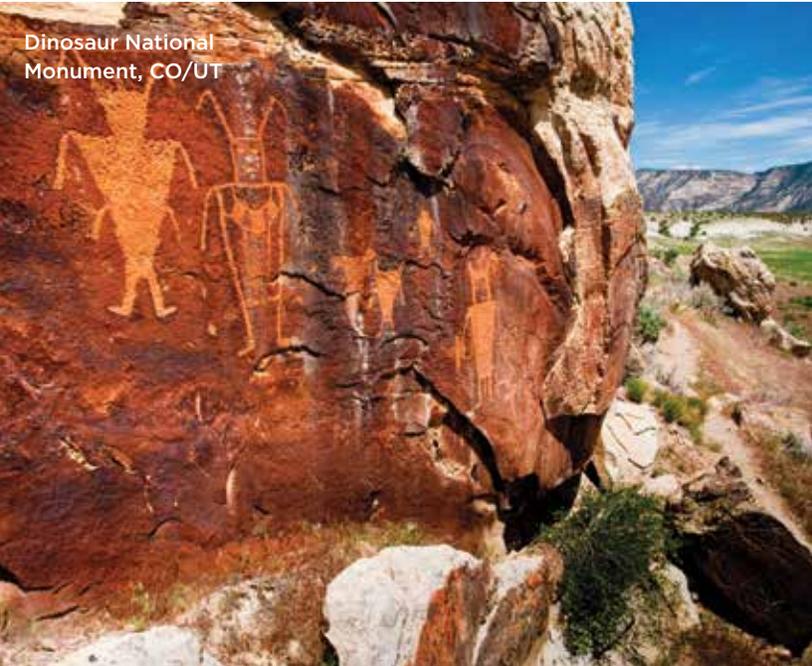
Canyonlands National Park, UT



Arches National Park, UT



Chaco Culture National Historic Park, NM



Dinosaur National Monument, CO/UT



Capitol Reef National Park, UT

Focusing on New Mexico National Parks

NPCA has quickly become more involved in national park issues throughout New Mexico since opening a new field office near Taos last year. At the **Valles Caldera National Preserve**—one of the newest units of the NPS—proposed geothermal energy development on neighboring Forest Service land could impact hot springs, mudpots, steaming fumaroles and other world-class sites in the preserve. NPCA is advocating for the no-leasing alternative. Meanwhile, we support Valles Caldera’s nomination as a “unique thermal feature,” as the NPS has done at Yellowstone, providing even stronger protection of the preserve.

At **Carlsbad Caverns National Park**, an oil and gas operation is being proposed just a few miles from the boundary, threatening the dark night skies, air quality and ecological health of the park. The Hayhurst Master Development Plan, including over 400 wells on 100 well pads, was rushed through an Environmental Assessment process with almost no public participation and little concern for park impacts. NPCA is insisting on a more thorough environmental review of the project, more robust public engagement and stipulations that will protect the park.



Above: Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM
©Galyna Andrushko | Dreamstime.com

TECHNOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF THE PARK EXPERIENCE

An App Developer's Journey through the Southwest



By Thomas Tash, Marketing Manager Chimani, Inc.

Growing up outside of Acadia National Park, the significance of unspoiled landscapes, humbling vastness, and the everlasting struggle to protect these most basic natural elements was not lost on me.

As the Marketing Manager for national park app developer Chimani, I’m always considering how we can use technology to educate and inspire new national park enthusiasts. But in order to truly understand how to connect people to “America’s best idea,” I had to head West.

In June, I was sent to the Southwest to research 13 national parks in eight days. I was enthralled by the beauty of Joshua Tree and Death Valley, and the stunning red rock of Utah’s “Mighty Five.” I looked back in time at Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest and Saguaro in Arizona. It was thrilling and exhausting, and would forever change my outlook on the urgency of protecting these brilliant places.

While my mission was to learn how to develop technology for addressing the future of visitation to the parks, it became clear to me that without increased efforts to educate the public on the issues that NPCA fights for every day, that the future of these places could never be guaranteed. I returned home feeling, as we all should, greater personal responsibility for their care.

For more information, go to www.chimani.com

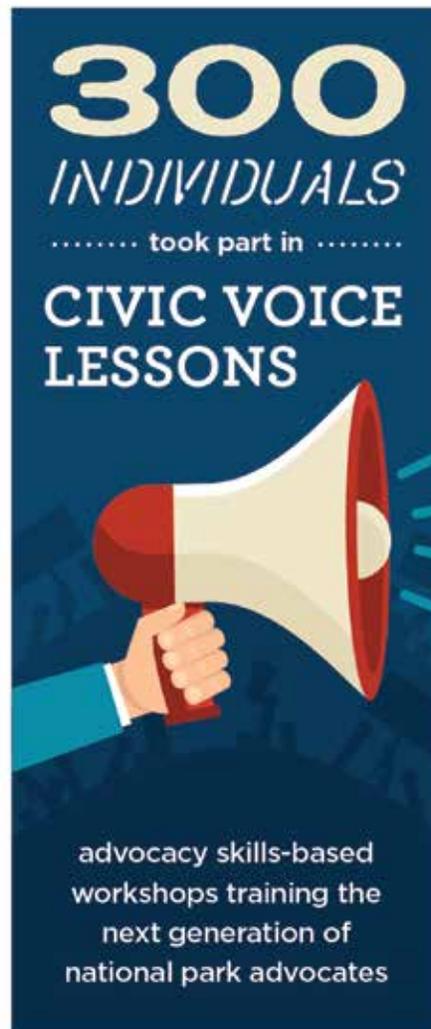
Above: Thomas Tash takes selfies as he explores the Southwest Parks. ©Thomas Tash

Building the Next Generation of National Park Stewards and Advocates

For the National Park Service centennial in 2016 and in anticipation of NPCA's upcoming centennial in 2019, we renewed our commitment to engaging young people in our national parks by giving them the tools and experience to care and advocate for the national parks in their second century. In the past year, NPCA hosted over 100 events, activities and projects across the country that engaged more than 35,000 people, nearly half of whom were millennials (ages 18-34). Volunteers took over 50,000 advocacy actions in support of our national parks and donated 45,000 hours of service. More information can be found here: findyourvoice.camp.

Here in the Southwest region, our advocacy role is to share information about issues facing the parks, explain what young people can do to help, and explore new pathways to jobs in public lands management and conservation. In 2016, we spread the word about national parks and the issues that threaten their future to hundreds of high school and college-aged students. Working with partner organizations, we sought opportunities to share the national park story with groups of young people who were already engaged in similar issues. NPCA staff participated in gatherings at colleges across Arizona as well as events organized by the Colorado Youth Summit, Hispanics for Parks and the Utah State University Student Organization for Society and Natural Resources (SOSNR).

We also know that experiencing the wonder of our national parks first hand is the best motivation for encouraging people to care for them. We had the opportunity to connect with young people who already had spent time in parks including Youth Conservation Corps crews that had worked on historic preservation and backcountry trail projects in Bandelier National Monument, college students living and working at the edge of Bryce Canyon National Park as part of the Southern Utah University Semester in the



Parks program and students who were touring several southwest national parks as part of the Eco-Flights program.

In Utah, we worked with partners to create the Youthworks in the Parks program offering new opportunities for 30 urban youth from Salt Lake City to visit Arches and Canyonlands National Parks for a



weekend to experience the majestic landscapes, explore a variety of outdoor recreational activities including camping, river rafting, and hiking, and learn about career opportunities on public lands and within the tourism industry. For most of the youth, the weekend provided their first time visiting a national park and camping.

As we look forward to the second century of the NPS, NPCA is committed to building a broad and powerful group of advocates who are willing to invest in the parks and protect these places that tell the story of our shared heritage.

Above: Utah State University students at Canyonlands National Park, UT
©Logan Christian, SOSNR Co-President

The Threads that Bind Us as a Nation

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experience double-digit growth year after year, the value of these places to Americans and the parks' impact on regional, often rural, economies cannot be denied. Pivoting off of the glorious NPS centennial observance, we want to sustain and expand our advocacy with and for you, to assure that

these most special places are protected and valued. We strongly believe that who we are as Americans is reflected in our shared history of great achievements and defining struggles. It is through the protection and careful, attentive interpretation afforded by the Park Service, that our defining stories are collected and remembered. At a time when what divides us is so present, it is important to celebrate our common heritage.

It's often over used, almost trite, but in 1983, Wallace Stegner wrote: "National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." It could not be said any better today. Our Southwest team will continue to work very hard to protect what is ours and to reinforce why now, more than ever, standing up for the parks is so very important.

Canyonlands, Bears Ears and an Uncertain Future

Looking at the landscape from the many striking overviews at Canyonlands National Park, visitors are stunned by the beauty of this colorful, ruggedly carved desert. What many people don't realize, however, is that only a portion of the land they are viewing lies within the park boundary—and much of the desert is vulnerable to adjacent incompatible uses and development.

For decades, NPCA and our supporters have worked to expand the boundaries at Canyonlands National Park to include more of the region's precious lands and waters. We want to complete the original vision for this park so the greater landscape is fully protected, while ensuring local, gateway communities continue to thrive.

For the past several years, NPCA engaged in the Utah Public Lands Initiative (PLI), a legislative effort by Utah Congressmen Bishop and Chaffetz to “strike an appropriate

balance between conservation and responsible development, and to create greater certainty for the citizens of Utah.” We had hoped this process held the potential to protect the larger landscape surrounding Canyonlands. Instead, the PLI legislation introduced to Congress in July 2016 puts many natural and cultural resources at risk, opens the door to further energy development and rolls back protections for public lands in eastern Utah, including much of the landscape adjacent to Canyonlands. Therefore, NPCA opposes the PLI legislation.

NPCA has joined tribal voices and other supporters asking the Obama administration to designate a Bears Ears National Monument. As proposed by a coalition of five Native American tribes, a Bears Ears National Monument would protect over 100,000 archeological sites, 18 wilderness and roadless areas, landscapes adjacent to Canyonlands National Park, Glen Canyon

National Recreation Area and Natural Bridges National Monument, and other spiritually significant sites in southeastern Utah.

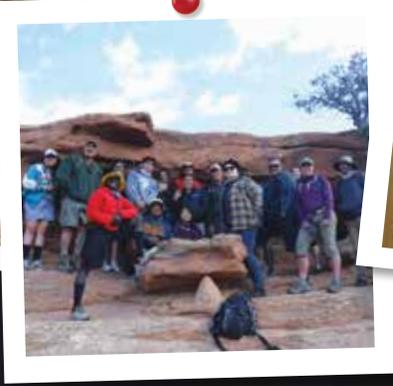
UPDATE: On December 28, 2016, President Obama permanently protected 1.35 million acres as Bears Ears National Monument. Importantly, this proclamation establishes a Bears Ears Commission to ensure that management decisions reflect tribal expertise as well as traditional and historical knowledge. This action will avert irresponsible off-road vehicle use, threats of mining and oil and gas drilling within sight of the adjacent parks, and destruction of sacred lands and important cultural and natural resources. NPCA remains steadfast in our advocacy for protecting the larger landscape surrounding Canyonlands and will continue to speak up for this place and others that can provide common ground for our divided country.

2016 SOUTHWEST REGIONAL EVENTS

LEFT TO RIGHT: NPCA's mascot, Teddy Mather, spent time in Salt Lake City attending the Summer Outdoor Retailer Show and the Farmers Market—encouraging advocates to get involved in protecting our national parks. Photo courtesy of NPCA Infamous Flapjack band members (left to right) David Carel, Sarah Noyce, Ben Barron and James Mitchell perform at Shoshone Point on

the rim of the Grand Canyon for their upcoming film Confluence directed by Amy Marquis and Dana Romanoff of National Park Experience. For more info go to: confluencethejourney.com @Dana Romanoff | NPX Indian Paint Brush @Paul Heaton | Dreamstime.com In September, NPCA and our partners, YouthWorks Salt Lake and Friends of Arches and Canyonlands Parks, lead our second YouthWorks in the

Parks trip to Moab with 13 Salt Lake City youth who explored Canyonlands National Park, experienced the dark night skies and rafted the Colorado River. Photo courtesy of Kate Fielder Jenkins U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich (right) and NM Program Manager Ernie Atencio attend the NPCA sponsored NPS Centennial Cody Brothers Photo Exhibit in Washington, DC. Photo courtesy of Sen. Heinrich | Flickr.



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